

BY STUDY AND ALSO BY FAITH

Suggestions and resources to work through questions related to LDS Church history, doctrine, and social issues

In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we value and seek after truth (1 Cor 13:6; 2 Ne 33:6). The scriptures speak of truth being knowledge of things as they really are, as they were, and as they are to come (Jacob 4:13; D&C 93:24). We embrace the principle that the Holy Ghost can be our companion in the quest for truth. He will guide us to and testify of truth (John 16:13; Moro 10:4-5). The purpose of this document is to provide some suggestions and also resources to help church members discover truth in a context of faith as they grapple with questions and issues related to our history and doctrine.

The Internet has revolutionized how we obtain and process information. With a few mouse clicks we have access to more information than people even a generation ago could have ever imagined. Social media, blogs, podcasts, and other mediums have exploded the possibilities for disseminating and interpreting that information. In recent years many Church members have encountered through these mediums information and perspectives about Church history, doctrine, and social issues with which they were previously unfamiliar. Sometimes this information may be surprising or confusing. Unfortunately some, if not many, of these sources (and the voices behind them) present information in a way that detracts from faith. They misrepresent the facts, fail to provide a full context of the facts, interpret the facts through faulty assumptions and premises, and/or make claims and inferences that do not acknowledge the complexity of history and human experience. Fortunately, as members of the Church we need not be afraid of or ashamed of truth. There *are* ways to deal with and respond to questions and issues that may be troubling to some through eyes and hearts of faith. The intent here is to provide a starting place to understand and respond to issues of concern using sources that are *both* truthful and faithful. It is not intended to be an exhaustive or all-inclusive list of helpful suggestions and resources. Any errors in content or perspective are the sole responsibility of the creator.

If the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the Church that administers it, are what they claim to be then they present us with the most important decisions of life. It is our sincere hope that as we seek learning, we will do so by “study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). Ultimately it is conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ through the witness of the Spirit that will sustain us.

Cautions in Research

- **Sources** – Carefully consider where the information being presented is coming from. Who is the author/speaker and what is their relationship to the Church? Where are they getting their information? Be cautious of “wolves in sheep’s

clothing”, who profess to be committed to Mormonism or to have a desire to help Church members, but in actuality have an agenda that detracts from faith in Jesus Christ and the restored gospel (Matt 7:15).

- **Motivations/Tone** – Evaluating the motives behind what is being shared and how it is being shared can be helpful in deciding how to receive information. For example, is the author presenting information for the sake of helping people understand something, or for the sake of criticizing or condemning? Tone often reveals motivation. Is the information being shared delivered in a tone of anger, cynicism, apathy, mocking, or contempt?
- **Black and white interpretations** – It can be tempting to view issues through a black or white lens. Few issues are as black or white as we would like them to be. Beware of arguments that make interpretations of historical events or figures in ways that do not acknowledge the complexity of history, culture, social dynamics, and numerous other factors that influence human events and personalities.
- **Perspective** – Individual, familial, societal, and historical biases inform people’s view of the world and greatly influence perception of history and social issues. It is unfair to impose 21st century culture, values, and understanding on people and events of the past. Does a source or author make judgments of the past from a perspective detached from the time and place in which events occurred?
- **Lack of context** – It is important to always consider the context in which information is presented. Facts detached from full context results in distortions. Does the source or author present fair and accurate context to their claims?

Ten General Principles to Work Through Difficult Issues

1. Keep calm: Sometimes encountering information or opinions for the first time can naturally leave even deeply held views feeling threatened, thus creating a sense of shock, surprise, fear, anger, or panic. At times the result is an almost obsessive pursuit to find answers and thus reduce our anxiety. However, the best answers and resolutions will occur through careful study, prayer, discussion, and contemplation. Intense and prolonged emotional reactions can impair our ability to think rationally and make wise decisions.
2. Ask for help: Unfortunately a culture has developed in the Church in which questions and doubts have often been perceived to be unacceptable or problematic, though efforts have been made recently to correct this. This culture might discourage us from sharing with others our experiences around questions and doubt, which means they will usually grow in the soil of isolation and shame. But we can be limited in our own perspective and understanding. Reaching out to trusted and accepting

friends, family members, ward members, church leaders, and scholars can help us carry the emotional burden that often accompanies faith challenges and also give us resources or perspective to work through them.

3. Take a break: It is not uncommon that the discovery of one piece of information leads to other questions or to the discovery of another piece of information. For some the journey can be all consuming, overwhelming, and exhausting. The research activities may detract from daily spiritual devotion and other activities that bring emotional, physical, and social health. Taking a temporary step away from trying to figure everything out *right now* can help ground us in what's most important and give us the opportunity to nourish our bodies, minds, and spirits.

4. Stay grounded in Christ and covenants: Ultimately the gospel and the Church are about our relationship with the Savior. It is through the atonement of Jesus Christ that we are saved. As we work through questions we can stay rooted and planted in the doctrine of Christ. We might remember the covenants we have made, holding fast to both the promises we have made and the beautiful and comforting promises made by our Heavenly Father to us. We can remember the spiritual witnesses we have received.

5. Pray: In our secular, scientific, and technological world we are socialized to discover truth and formulate opinions through a search of tangible evidence and rational argument. This is appropriate, but spiritual knowledge and truth involves an additional process. No amount of earthly evidence or argument can prove that the gospel is true and no amount of evidence can disprove it. These are spiritual questions that must be engaged through spiritual methods. The scripture that prompted the boy prophet to seek revelation applies to us today, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upraideth not." (James 1:5).

6. Doubt your doubts: President Uchtdorf has counseled church members to doubt our doubts before we doubt our faith. Elder Holland and others have suggested that we hold on to what we *do* know. If we are open to question what we believe, should we not also be open to question our doubts? Perhaps we will need to tolerate some ambiguity while leaving room for understanding and belief to develop, where at the moment there is only confusion and doubt.

7. The questions we ask determine the answers we get: This may seem obvious, but it is more profound than it may appear. The way we formulate a question influences the answer to that question. Cynical questions result in cynical answers. To use a general example, if during a disagreement with a spouse we ask the question, "Why is my spouse being so inconsiderate?" the question itself assigns blame and motives, which will color the lens through which we view the situation and greatly influence the answer. On the other hand the question, "What is my spouse's perspective?" opens us up to empathy, learning, and understanding. This principle is critical in any research endeavor.

8. New perspectives: Be open to more developed understanding and interpretation of Church history, principles, and social issues. Sometimes experiencing distress in response to discovering an issue of concern is a result of rigid ideas (even widely held) that are not based in doctrine, truth, or accurate understanding. Resolution to concerns may come more from adjusting those underlying ideas than from anything else. It is usually not what we don't know that we should be afraid of, it's what we think we know that just isn't so that we need to be careful about.
9. Be patient: The reality is that some issues are much more complex than they seem on the surface. Many have spent years studying historical, doctrinal, and social issues and still have more to understand. The certainty of today often gives way to the developments and insights of tomorrow. With what is at stake related to our participation in the gospel of Jesus Christ shouldn't we give things some time before making choices that can have profound consequences? Shouldn't we let the dust settle? Shouldn't we give the Lord time to build things up for us line upon line and precept upon precept as we continue to diligently seek?
10. Choose faith and community: In our quest for truth we will find information that confirms testimony and information that challenges it. Ultimately faith requires the vulnerability of choice. It is first and foremost a mental and spiritual act of risk and hope. When we are grappling with questions, doubts, and challenges to faith perhaps the most important question is, "What is this experience calling me to develop?" Maybe in the trial of our faith we are being refined to a more mature faith, a more charitable heart, and a more humble spirit if we will just turn our lives over to God and allow Him to do His work. Please choose faith. Faith doesn't mean that you are certain about something; it simply means that you act on your hope. Modern society likes to emphasize the importance of spirituality over religiosity, but this diminishes the value and sacredness of ordinances and covenants, as well as the important human endeavor of associating with others in community. It is in relationship with others that we are most able to develop the attributes of the divine nature. Only in community do we have the opportunity to serve and be served, to give, to share, to comfort and be comforted, to repent and to forgive. Please choose community. We may get frustrated at times with our peculiarities and foibles, but we are your people and you are part of ours.

Scriptures and Reflection

Below are scriptures that teach of faith, learning, and truth. There are also questions connected to the verses of scripture for you to ponder and prayerfully contemplate. You might even consider creating a small journal and writing down thoughts and impressions that flow from that effort. We invite you to give *at least* equal time to scriptures and prayer as you give to articles, posts, and commentaries found on social media! ☺

Faith

Alma 32:21; Heb 11:1; Ether 12:6 What does it mean to have faith? In what doctrines and principles of the gospel would you like to place hope and belief, even if you don't have certainty?

1 Cor 2:5; Moro 7:40-41; Hel 5:12 In whom and in what should our faith be placed? Why?

Ether 12:6; D&C 63:8-10; 2 Ne 27:23 What is the relationship between faith and spiritual witness or signs?

Moroni 7:42-44; Romans 10:17 What attributes and practices are required for faith to develop?

Alma 32:37-43 What is required to sustain faith? How can we nourish faith?

James 1:3; 1 Pet 1:7-9; Mos 23:21 What does the Lord teach us about what He will do with our faith? Why?

Ether 12:27-28; Ephesians 3:16-19 What is grace? What role can grace play in our journey of faith?

Truth and Learning

Alma 26:22; Moro 10:4-7; D&C 5:23-28 What is required to receive revelation about the truth and to know and understand the mysteries of God?

D&C 88:118; 2 Ne 9:28-29 How does the Lord direct us to seek learning? What does this mean to you?

D&C 93:24-28, 36-37 What is truth? What do the words of the Lord teach us about the role of truth in our doctrine?

D&C 88:62-68 What does it mean to draw near to the Lord and to seek diligently in our quest for truth? What does it mean to have an eye single to His glory such that we may be filled with light?

D&C 50:19-24 What does it mean to receive the *word of truth* by the *Spirit of Truth*? What does it mean to receive it by "some other way"? Why might this matter?

Cautions

1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 4:4

What does the Apostle Paul warn and prophesy about faith in the latter days?

Alma 30:12-18, 23-28

What are the parallels that exist between the anti-Christ, Korihor, and some voices (both inside and outside the church) today?

D&C 67:3; Jacob 4:18

What might impede feeling the spirit and/or receiving answers to prayers?

Hope and Promises

Mark 5:35-42

What does this story teach about faith and hope?

Daniel 3:13-29

What can we learn about faith from the three young men when they faced a fiery furnace?

Mark 9:17-27

How did the father in this story exercise faith even in his “unbelief”? What do we learn about the character and compassion of God in response to our efforts toward faith?

D&C 90:24

What is the promise to those who choose to search, pray, believe, and remember?

D&C 97:8-9

In what ways is the Lord inviting you to have a broken heart and a contrite spirit? What sacrifice(s) of the heart, mind, and will might be necessary for you to observe your covenants and thus receive the promises of God?

Discourses and Articles - Church Leaders or Church-Sponsored Publications

Author	Title	Subject	Publication/Date	Link
Elder Bruce C. Hafen	On Dealing with Uncertainty	Insights on dealing with ambiguity, uncertainty, and complexity in matters of faith.	<i>Ensign</i> , Aug 1979	https://www.lds.org/ensign/1979/08/on-dealing-with-uncertainty?lang=eng
Pres. Dieter F. Uchtdorf	Come, Join with Us	There is room for everyone in the Church. Doubt your doubts before you doubt your faith.	<i>Ensign</i> , Nov 2013	https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/10/come-join-with-us?lang=eng
Elder Jeffrey R. Holland	Lord, I Believe	Honestly acknowledging questions and concerns, but forever fanning the flame of faith.	<i>Ensign</i> , May 2013	https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2013/04/lord-i-believe?lang=eng
Sis. Rosemary M. Wixom	Returning to Faith	The story of a woman who lost and then regained her faith.	<i>Ensign</i> , May 2015	https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/04/returning-to-faith?lang=eng
Pres. Dieter F. Uchtdorf	Be Not Afraid, Only Believe	Exercising courage and agency to believe.	<i>Ensign</i> , Nov 2015	https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/10/be-not-afraid-only-believe?lang=eng
Elder Neil L. Anderson	Faith Is Not by Chance, but by Choice	Honest questions are necessary for faith. Faith must be cultivated by choice.	<i>Ensign</i> , Nov 2015	https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/10/faith-is-not-by-chance-but-by-choice?lang=eng
Elder D. Todd Christofferson	Why The Church	The importance of participation in the institutional Church in our life of faith and spirituality.	<i>Ensign</i> , Nov 2015	https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2015/10/why-the-church?lang=eng
Adam Kotter	When Doubts and Questions Arise	Searching for answers to tough questions in the Lord's way can bring us closer to God.	<i>Ensign</i> , March 2015	https://www.lds.org/ensign/2015/03/when-doubts-and-questions-arise?lang=eng
Elder M. Russell Ballard	The Opportunities and Responsibilities of CES Teachers in the 21 st Century	The importance of introducing and discussing complex social, historical, and doctrinal issues in open and honest ways using reliable sources.	<i>An Evening with a General Authority for CES Teachers</i> , Feb 2016	https://www.lds.org/broadcasts/article/evening-with-a-general-authority/2016/02/the-opportunities-and-responsibilities-of-ces-teachers-in-the-21st-century?lang=eng
Elder Steven E. Snow	Start with Faith: A Conversation with Elder Steven E. Snow (Church Historian)	A discussion about the Church's ongoing efforts at openness and transparency with church history.	<i>Religious Educator</i> , 2013	https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/volume-14-number-3-2013/start-faith-conversation-elder-steven-e-snow

Discourses and Articles – Scholars and General Church Membership

Author	Title	Subject	Publication/Date	Link
Teryl Givens	Letter to a Doubter	Honoring and validating a place for questions, doubts, and uncertainty.	<i>Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture</i> , 2013	http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/letter-to-a-doubter/
Eugene England	Why the Church is as True as the Gospel	The value of our participation in the institutional Church as an ideal school of love and growth.	<i>Eugene England Foundation</i> , 1985	http://www.eugeneengland.org/why-the-church-is-as-true-as-the-gospel
Robert L. Millett (editor)	No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues	Series of essays on some of the common controversial and difficult intellectual, historical, and doctrinal issues.	<i>BYU Religious Studies Center</i> , 2011	https://rsc.byu.edu/recent-books/no-weapon-shall-prosper-new-light-sensitive-issues
Clayton Christensen	Why I Belong, Why I Believe	The value of Church membership and belief.	Personal Website, 1999	http://66.147.244.131/~claytor2/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Why_I_Belong_and_Why_I_Believe.pdf
Rich Millar	How I Lost and Regained My Faith	Eighteen lessons shared by a man who left the Church and then returned.	<i>Deseret News</i> , Jan 14, 2015	http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865619596/How-I-lost-and-regained-my-faith-LDS-man-shares-18-lessons-he-learned.html?pg=all
Patrick Q. Mason	Surviving a Faith Crisis (and How Church Members Can Help)	Suggestions to assist members who are struggling with doctrinal, historical, and or social concerns.	<i>LDS Living</i> , Nov 17, 2015	http://www.ldsliving.com/Surviving-a-Faith-Crisis-with-the-Help-of-Church-Members/s/80563

Websites

Website Name	Website Address	Source	Description
Gospel Topics Essays	https://www.lds.org/topics/essays?lang=eng	Official website of the Church	Numerous short essays on a wide range of topics, including: Becoming Like God, Book of Mormon and DNA studies, Book of Mormon Translation, First Vision Accounts, Mother in Heaven, Peace and Violence among 19 th Century LDS, Plural Marriage, Race and the Priesthood, and the Book of Abraham.

Church History	https://history.lds.org/?lang=eng	Official website of the Church	Video recordings of lectures about historical topics. Revelations in context: The historical context of every section of the D&C. Additional historical information. <i>The First Fifty Years of Relief Society</i> is also available for free with thousands of images and original documents in electronic form.
Joseph Smith Papers Project	http://josephsmithpapers.org	Church Historian's Press	Joseph Smith Papers project is an endeavor by the Church Historian's office to compile and annotate all remaining papers and documents from the Prophet Joseph, including his journals. The project has received wide praise from scholars outside of the church.
Mormon Newsroom	http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/topics-and-background/	Official Website of the Church	An official resource for news media and the public that provides statements on many different topics related to the Church.
Mormons and Gays	http://mormonsandgays.org	Official website of the Church	A discussion from church leaders and members around same-sex attraction and the relationship of gays and lesbians to the Church.
Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship	http://mi.byu.edu	Research institute affiliated with BYU, comprised of various scholars	Scholarly articles, books, and resources on a variety of historical and theological topics, including complex and challenging issues.
BYU Studies	https://byustudies.byu.edu	Religious Studies Department of BYU	Articles on a wide variety of topics related to scripture, history, and religious life. Study helps for scriptures and a full multi-volume church history are also available.
Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR Mormon)	http://www.fairmormon.org	A private, non-profit organization made up of LDS scholars and theologians	Faithful answers to critical questions from LDS Scholars. Opportunity to ask scholars questions and engage in dialogue. Responses from faithful scholars to critical books, websites, and other material. Many other resources.
Mormon Scholars Testify	http://mormonscholars-testify.org	A private, non-profit group of LDS scholars	Hundreds of written testimonies from Mormon scholars from around the world and a variety of disciplines.
Mormon Interpreter	http://www.mormoninterpreter.com	A non-profit, independent, peer-reviewed educational journal focused on LDS scripture	Articles, podcasts, blog, and video presentations on a wide variety of topics related to LDS scripture. Includes video podcasts of roundtable discussions about gospel doctrine lessons.
Book of Mormon Central	https://bookofmormoncentral.org	A private, non-profit organization made up of researchers, writers, archivists, etc.	Numerous articles and essays discussing the archaeology, historicity, and doctrine of the Book of Mormon.
Leading LDS	http://leadinglds.com	A private, non-profit organization run by a church member	Articles and podcasts about effective leadership in the church, including around sensitive issues.
Joseph Smith's Polygamy	http://josephsmithspolygamy.org	A private website founded and run by the leading LDS scholar on	Answers to questions about polygamy as taught and practiced by Joseph Smith. Insightful historical and theological analysis

		the polygamous practices of Joseph Smith	of early polygamy from a faithful perspective.
Mormon Women Project	http://www.mormonwomen.com	A private website founded and run by an LDS woman	Digital library of interviews with faithful LDS women from around the world, often exploring sensitive and challenging issues and concerns.
NorthStar and LDS Voices of Hope	http://northstarlds.org http://ldsvoicesofhope.org	A private, non-profit organization comprised of faithful Latter-day Saints dedicated to assisting persons with same-sex attraction through a faith-affirming approach	Resources for persons with same-sex attraction, their families, and church leaders that approach the issue from a faithful LDS perspective. Voices of Hope is a repository of written and video essays from hundreds of Church members who experience same-sex attraction.

Podcasts

Podcast Name	Link	Source	Description
Joseph Smith Papers	http://www.mormonchannel.org/listen/series/the-joseph-smith-papers-audio	The Mormon Channel – an official media outlet of the Church	Episodes discussing the life and ministry of Joseph Smith as part of the Joseph Smith Papers project. Episodes generally include excerpts of interviews with various historians and scholars.
Past Impressions	http://www.mormonchannel.org/listen/series/past-impressions-audio	The Mormon Channel – an official media outlet of the Church	30-minute podcast episodes detailing the history of the church from its very beginnings. Typically episodes are interviews with historians.
Legacy	http://www.mormonchannel.org/listen/series/legacy-audio	The Mormon Channel – an official media outlet of the Church	30-60 minute podcast episodes detailing various events and people in the history of the Church. Typically episodes are interviews with historians.
Conversations	http://www.mormonchannel.org/listen/series/conversations-audio	The Mormon Channel – an official media outlet of the Church	60-minute interviews with members of the Quorum of the Twelve and other General Authorities and General Auxiliary leaders.
Maxwell Institute	http://mi.byu.edu/tag/podcast/	Research institute affiliated with BYU, comprised of various scholars	30-60 minute podcast episodes about various topics related to history, scripture, doctrine, and culture. Episodes are typically interviews with scholars and experts.
FAIR Mormon	http://www.fairmormon.org/media/fairmorm	A private, non-profit organization made up of LDS scholars and theologians	Numerous podcasts available. Of special note would be <i>Keeping the Faith</i> (guidance to work through challenges

	mon-podcasts		to faith along with interviews of people who have navigated through faith crisis), <i>Faith and Reason</i> , <i>Fair Examination</i> , <i>Fair Conversations</i> , and <i>Best of FairMormon</i> .
Mormon Interpreter	http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/other-posts/	A private, non-profit educational journal focused on LDS scripture. The board is made up of LDS scholars and church members	Podcasts, video lectures, and roundtable discussions about history, scripture, and doctrine are available. Topics vary, but include discussions about gospel doctrine lessons each week.
Leading LDS	http://leadinglds.com/category/mp3/	A private, non-profit organization run by a church member	Podcasts about effective leadership in the Church, including around sensitive issues.

Books

Book Title	Author(s)	Publisher	Description
Crucible of Doubt: Reflections on the Quest for Faith	Teryl and Fiona Givens	Deseret Book Company	The importance of questions in matters of faith, along with the importance of how questions are framed. An intelligent look at doubt and the opportunities it may present toward faith.
Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling	Richard L. Bushman	Vintage	The definitive biography of Joseph Smith. Highlights the life of the prophet in historical and social context. Bushman is considered the leading scholar on the life of Joseph Smith.
Planted: Belief and Belonging in an Age of Doubt	Patrick Q. Mason	Deseret Book Company	A candid and empathic conversation about the relationship of doubt and faith. Provides practical suggestions to stay planted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
Evolving Faith: Wanderings of a Mormon Biologist	Steven L. Peck	Neal A. Maxwell Institute and Deseret Book	Written by an LDS biologist at BYU, the book discusses the relationship of science and faith, and how both are indispensable in navigating our world.
Shaken Faith Syndrome: Strengthening One's Testimony in the Face of Criticism and Doubt	Michael R. Ash	Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR)	A book about crisis of faith that demonstrates how people can be both rational thinkers and devout believers. The book addresses many of the common questions related to history and doctrine.

No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues	Robert L. Millett	Deseret Book Company	Faithful scholars discuss common criticisms leveled against the Church such as First Vision accounts, plural marriage, and Book of Mormon translation.
By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion	Teryl Givens	Oxford University Press	Discussion of the Book of Mormon in both its history and theology.
Mormon's Codex: An Ancient American Book	John L. Sorenson	Deseret Book Company	A culmination of 60 years of research on Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon. The leading LDS scholar in Mesoamerican and Book of Mormon studies reviews 400 points in which the Book of Mormon corresponds to ancient Mesoamerican history and culture.
Massacre at Mountain Meadows	Ronald Walker and Richard Turley	Oxford University Press	The most thoroughly researched account of the Mountain Meadows massacre. Written by historians at the Church Historian's office and published by an outside press.
Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Toward a Better Understanding	Brian and Laura Hales	Greg Kofford Books	A short volume that helps readers wade through the theology and history of plural marriage as practiced by Joseph Smith, written by the leading experts on the topic.
Voices of Hope: Latter-day Saint Perspectives on Same Gender Attraction	Ty Mansfield	Deseret Book Company	Information and perspective from gospel scholars, as well as personal essays from members of the church who experience same-sex attraction.